

Statement of Congressman Ron Kind
Motion to Instruct—Senior Nutrition
November 18, 2003

Mr. Speaker: I rise today in support of my good friend from Rhode Island, Mr. Kennedy's motion to instruct the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations conferees on senior nutrition services.

In 1972, when it amended the Older Americans Act, Congress included senior nutrition programs as permanent services. Today senior nutrition programs, both Meals On Wheels and those located in congregate locations like senior centers, serve over one million meals each day.

These meal programs are as diverse as the communities they serve. Yet one aspect is common to meals programs across the country: a constant struggle to stretch limited resources as far as possible. Funding for Meals On Wheels and other senior nutritious programs comes from federal, state, and local governments, as well as from individuals, foundations and public/private partnerships. But the funding the federal government provides is absolutely crucial to the success of these programs because it is seed money that literally leverages hundreds of millions of non-federal dollars each year. While the

amount of funds that Congress provides to these programs is small in comparison to hundreds of other programs funded through the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations bill, I can think of few programs more worthy of adequate funding and deserving of the attention of the conferees.

The services provided by these funds are crucial to my home state of Wisconsin. The most recent data shows that almost 75,000 people are served by these programs each year, and over five million meals were served to the people of Wisconsin, in congregate settings or in their homes. Mr. Speaker, we ought to recognize the selfless work of those Americans who help seniors by delivering and serving meals. And we ought to assure our seniors continue to receive what is too often their only meal of the day. Let us continue the worthy tradition of bringing food, visitors, and hope to millions of frail and elderly Americans each year.

I urge my colleagues to support the motion and include the highest level of funding in the Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations bill.